

Film Review: Billy Bob Thornton's 'Jayne Mansfield's Car' Stalls Out

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 11, 2013 - 1:11pm

- [Billy Bob Thornton](#) [2]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [3]
- [Frances O'Connor](#) [4]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [5]
- [Jayne Mansfield's Car](#) [6]
- [John Hurt](#) [7]
- [Katherine LaNasa](#) [8]
- [Kevin Bacon](#) [9]
- [Ray Stevenson](#) [10]
- [Robert Duvall](#) [11]
- [Robert Patrick](#) [12]
- [Shawnee Smith](#) [13]

CHICAGO – There was a time when it looked like not only would Oscar winner Billy Bob Thornton be one of our great actors but possibly a threat behind the camera as well. Everyone knows the impression of his character from “Sling Blade” but many forget that he directed it as well. He followed that up with the flawed but ambitious and interesting “All the Pretty Horses.” Then his career faded, failing to find the parts that could really show his undeniable talents in front of the camera and simply not working behind it.



Rating: **2.0/5.0**

His first directorial effort since 2001's awful “Daddy & Them” is making its debut on some On Demand platforms and in limited release this Friday and, despite some interesting performances and ideas, “Jayne Mansfield's Car” is not the movie to give Billy Bob his much-needed comeback. It's episodic, uneven, bizarre, clichéd, and boring all at the same time. And every time it feels like it's finally going to cohere into the modern Tennessee Williams piece that it clearly aspires to be, it careens off the road in sometimes spectacular fashion.



[Read Brian Tallerico's full review of "Jayne Mansfield's Car" in our reviews section.](#)
[14]

It is 1969 Alabama, a hotbed of social issues for Thornton and co-writer Tom Epperson (“One False Move,” which features a great supporting turn from Thornton) to play with from Vietnam to the civil rights movement. In fact, the film opens with a protest. Carroll Caldwell (Kevin Bacon) is protesting the Vietnam war in his small town, getting arrested, and getting chewed out by his tough-as-nails Great War vet pop Jim (Robert Duvall). Jim has two other sons, the solid and old-fashioned Jimbo (Robert Patrick) and the oddball Skip (Thornton). They have been raised by their aggressive father since their mother Naomi skipped town for the U.K. decades earlier.

Culture clashes abound when the Caldwells receive a call informing them that their estranged mom is dead. She has asked that her body be brought back to Alabama to be buried. And with her comes her British family, including second husband Kingsley Bedford (John Hurt) and his family, which includes Phillip (Ray Stevenson) and Camilla (Frances O'Connor). Multiple generations, Brits vs. Americans, the difference between the approach to World War I, WWII, and Vietnam, PTSD, the expansion of drugs into small towns in the '60s, general large family drama – Thornton has dozens of themes to plug into his soap opera and he wants to include every one. “Jayne Mansfield's Car” is cluttered with characters and subplots, and only a few of them resonate at all.



[Continue reading for Brian Tallerico's full "Jayne Mansfield's Car" review.](#) [14]

“Jayne Mansfield's Car” stars Billy Bob Thornton, Robert Duvall, Kevin Bacon, Ray Stevenson, Robert Patrick, Shawnee Smith, John Hurt, Katherine LaNasa, and Frances O'Connor. It was written by Thornton and Tom Epperson and directed by Thornton. It is now available On Demand and opens Friday, September 13, 2013 in New York, Atlanta, Dallas, and other markets.



Jayne Mansfield's Car

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- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/frances-oconnor>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/jayne-mansfields-car>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/john-hurt>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/katherine-lanasa>
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- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/22436/billy-bob-thornton-s-jayne-mansfield-s-car-stalls-out>